

PERFECT PLACES



The Tram Haus Lodge breathes new life into an old Vermont resort.



FROM LEFT: COURTESY JAY PEAK RESORT; BRIAN SUMMERS/AGE FOTOSTOCK

Peak of Perfection

JAY PEAK'S LOCAL APPROACH MAKES FOR GLOBAL APPEAL



BY ERICA DUECY

JAY PEAK, VERMONT, IS A “LOVE IT” OR “HATE IT” SKI RESORT. It appeals, first and foremost, to dedicated riders looking for the best powder in the region — an Alta of the east, for those who take their mountains straight up, without frills or fluff. Also, without things like night life, shopping, or dining out.*

But soon, even nonskiers may warm up to Jay Peak. The resort is partway through a \$140 million expansion to its on-mountain facilities. The Tram Haus, a new base lodge with a 57-suite hotel, opened last season, allowing this once-Spartan resort to now offer gourmet meals and indulgent hot-stone massages. Next up are a 170-room hotel centered on a 50,000-square-foot water park, an expanded spa, three restaurants, and several retail outlets, which are slated for completion in 2012. Even the skiing is improving, with three new lifts in the works for the resort's West Bowl.*

And then there's the glistening, glorious snow. With almost 400 inches a year, Jay Peak gets more powder than any Eastern resort, and even some Western ones. "We're blessed in that our ridgeline is the tallest in the northern Green Mountains," says Bill Stenger, president of Jay Peak. "Storm clouds hit that ridge and dump their snow on us. It's like a snow fence."

The mountain is also known for excellent off-piste skiing on an additional 70 acres of downhill terrain. "We don't restrict the skier or snowboarder from going into the woods, between trails, or off-piste," Stenger says. "The ability to ski and ride anywhere gives people a sense of freedom that they won't find anywhere else." The resort even teaches tree skiing to kids in its ski school.

As Jay Peak grows, it is conscientious about maintaining its regional flavor. The resort is hyperlocal in focus, and almost everything is Vermont sourced, forged, and staffed. In the Tram Haus restaurant, reclaimed barn boards from neighboring farms have been refashioned into tables, and paintings from local artists line the walls. Dismantled chairlift towers and sheave wheels have been welded into custom fixtures for the Tower Bar. In the hotel suites, everything from coffee tables to bedside stands to carved stools is made by local craftsmen from local materials. The new lodge is also eco-friendly in its design and operations, with low-flow water fixtures, and energy-efficient lighting and heating systems. In cold months, the restaurant's walk-in refrigerators are chilled by outside air.

At the restaurant Alice's Table (named after a beloved employee, Alice "Grammy Jay" Lewis), chefs use the best products from the area's farmers and foragers to create a menu loaded with

Vermont's bounty, offering diners dishes like seared venison with butternut-squash gratin and wilted greens, and beef tenderloin with blue cheese and bacon mashed potatoes.

The Tram Haus is a rustic, comfortably upscale lodge that's in line with Jay Peak's unpretentious style. "The vibe is high energy but really laid back," says one local. It's like the old Jay Peak, only better. What's not to love? ❄️



Unexpected luxuries await those who travel to Jay Peak merely for the best snow in the East.



COURTESY JAY PEAK RESORT (3)